

Business Opportunities with the Federal Government

Information gateway, prepared by the Congressional Research Service, provides guidance and online procurement procedures for doing business with the federal government, updated January 2010 .

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Information and Training
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Learning how to sell successfully to the U.S. government, the world's largest buyer of goods and services, can be daunting. Most of the process is conducted online: using a computer is essential. Here are suggested approaches:

- Update your company's business plan, highlighting special products, skills and expertise that might be of interest to government agencies.
- Review your company's marketing strategy and goals.
- Learn federal procurement processes and terms.
- Government Contracting (SBA) Resources to help you sell your products and services to the Federal government.
- Small Business Administration (SBA)

Provides a step-by-step guide for selling to the government, with tips on bidding, marketing, and competing for government contracts, and links to free online courses.

- Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) Provides an on-line system (Phoenix) that allows minority business firms to register the company with the MBDA's database to access contract opportunities and other resources.
- General Services Administration (GSA)

As the government's chief acquisitions agency, GSA spends billions of dollars annually on products and services offered to all federal agencies.
Doing Business with GSA

Covers government procedures, marketing strategies, and bidding procedures for contracts. Also lists important contacts, such as the 11 GSA regional centers and technical advisors for small businesses.

Office of Small Business Utilization (OSBU)

Through outreach activities in regional offices, promotes increased access to GSA's nationwide procurement opportunities for small, minority, veteran, HUBZone, and women business owners.

GSA Training Programs

Online and onsite courses for vendors and small business, for federal employees, and for state and local government officials.

Contact offices in your state or region.

Speak with procurement specialists or contracting officers about federal government buying procedures.

Ask questions about application procedures, technical requirements, and marketing suggestions.

Attend procurement programs, opportunities for business people to meet directly with government officials and to learn from other companies involved in federal contracting.

Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)

Located in every state, these advise and train businesses in financial matters, including certification procedures for small and minority businesses. An excellent first stop for any business, especially those with little or no previous experience in dealing with federal procurement.

Minority Business Development Agency MBDA Network regional enterprise centers provide resources for minority-owned firms.

Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC)

Although the main focus is providing technical assistance on selling to the military, the centers cover marketing to all government agencies through counseling, training, and procurement programs.

GSA Regions Overview

The contracting officers are familiar with the procurement needs of the federal facilities located in their region.

Registration Requirements

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Registration is required to compete for federal government procurement and contracts. The federal government's Business Partner Network (BPN) is the single source for vendor data for the Federal Government.

- Obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number, a unique 9-digit identification number for each physical location of a business.

- Register with the government's Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database.

- Complete an Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA).

Review Small Disadvantaged Business Certification and Eligibility (SDB).

If your business is classified as small or disadvantaged, this certification may lead to more federal procurement opportunities.

Additional statistical codes, required for many government forms:

- North American Industrial Classification Code (NAICS)

Identify products or services for more than 1,000 industries.

- Federal Supply Classification (FSC)

Classify products and services purchased by the military and many civilian agencies.

Federal Business Opportunities TOP

FedBizOpps (Federal Business Opportunities)

Single point of entry for announcements of federal contract opportunities over \$25,000, both civilian and military. Serves both federal agencies as buyers and businesses as vendors.

For continuing business, apply to become a GSA Schedules contractor. Under the GSA Schedules Program, GSA establishes long-term governmentwide contracts that allow customers to acquire a vast array of supplies and services directly from commercial suppliers. Gives many businesses, small and large, further opportunities for multiple awards.

- Also called Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) and Federal Supply Schedules (FSS).
- Getting on Schedule Application and approval process "to get on the Schedule" can take considerable time but may be worth it for future business with government agencies.
- GSA Training Includes Training for Vendors, such as Need Help Getting on Schedule?

Subcontracting Opportunities TOP

A federal contract may be so large that a single company might have difficulty in providing the products or services required to meet the terms of the contract. A prime contractor may need to use subcontractors to complete contractual obligations.

- SUB-Net (SBA Subcontracting Network)

Identify subcontract opportunities by reviewing the postings of prime contractors.

- Subcontracting Opportunities Directory (SBA)

Identify prime contractors by state, with addresses and phone numbers.

- Subcontracting Directory (GSA)

GSA contractors with subcontracting plans and goals. Companies are listed within each of the eleven GSA regions. For each, gives products and services offered, and the small business contact within the company.

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Specialized Information on Selling to the Military

Many of the DOD contract announcements and registration requirements for businesses have been incorporated into FedBizOpps, with registration at Central Contractor Registration (CCR). However, there are often special requirements for selling to the military. The vast majority of DOD contracts are awarded by DOD field organizations, or specific mission-oriented agencies within an organization.

- Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP)

DOD information, publications, and programs to assist small, disadvantaged, or minority businesses to compete for DOD contracts, including Guide to DOD Contracting Opportunities.

- Defense Logistics Agency

Provides links to government websites with information for small businesses wanting to sell to the military. Also there is a link to the listings of local Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, which provide information and counseling to business wanting to sell to the government.